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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION; BUSH SPEECH ON CUBA; 10/25/07

11. SUMMARY STATEMENT

Today's leading international stories focus on US President Bush's speech on Cuba.

12. OPINION PIECES AND EDITORIALS

- "Bush creates a world fund for the Cuban transition"

Ana Barsn, leading "Clarn's" Washington-based correspondent, writes (10/25) "In an address to the US-Cuban community in Miami..., US President George W. Bush said yesterday that the US will only lift its embargo on Cuba when a democratic system is established on that 'tropical gulag.'

"Ignoring that after 40 years this policy has failed..., Bush urged the international community to support the Cuban opposition and he announced the creation of an International Fund for Cuban Freedom, which will be implemented once a democratic government takes over in the reconstruction of the Cuban economy.

"... The truth is that every time Cuban-American representatives stood up and strongly applauded, not a single Ambassador (except for the one from Malta), applauded."

- "Bush calls Cubans to rebel themselves"

Hugo Alconada Mon, daily-of-record "La Nacisn's" Washington-based correspondent, comments (10/25) "In his most blunt statement on Cuba in the last four years, US President George W. Bush launched yesterday a controversial call to the armed forces and security forces of the 'dying regime' to ally themselves with democratic dissidents to put an end to the 'tropical gulag' led by Fidel Castro, his brother Ral and their entourage...

"... Bush's speech occurred while there is still speculation on Fidel Castro's health and his brother Raul's leadership now that several academics and analysts blame the White House for having been left out of the transition started in July 2006.

"... Bush chose to ask the international community to contribute to the Cuban transition, with which Spain and other Latin American countries seek greater integration...

"US criticism was mainly focused on the Rodrguez Zapatero administration, but also on some Latin American governments and the OAS. Bush said that the opening should be promoted by dissidents and accepted by the members of the status quo, as happened in the Soviet Union."

- "A trivial reason for the threat"

Hugo Alconada Mon, daily-of-record "La Nacisn's" Washington-based correspondent, writes (10/25) "Why George W. Bush's address on Cuba?..

"US Secretary of Commerce Carlos Gutierrez said it was because of scheduling issues.

"However, it is more interesting to wonder why the White House insists on a trade embargo that is rejected by the international community and that Democrats want to make more flexible. Why (is the US) so tough on Cubans while it is so flexible, for example, with Chinese Communists?

"Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Latin America Thomas Shannon said: 'For some of us, the differences are fairly obvious.'

"Honestly enough, there are some differences. Among others, the openness to China promoted by then president Richard Nixon allowed the US to give the Soviet Union a headache.

"The second difference is obvious. Cuba is 150 kilometers from Florida. As many repeat in this capital city, it is in the superpower's 'backyard,' which turns the island into a matter of US domestic as well as foreign policy.

"This is due to its geographic location and its symbolic value after decades of ideological confrontation, but also due to the political importance acquired by the exiled Cuban community in the US with the passing of years as their electoral influence in Florida become increasingly decisive for presidential elections.

"... In this context, Bush reaffirmed the trade embargo and the diplomatic confrontation, far from any attempt to dialogue, like Ronald Reagan held with Mikhail Gorbachov. Bush gave this address now because the White House wants Cubans to take the first step by opening up to democracy, releasing political prisoners and honoring freedom. Bush drew this line again yesterday and Gutierrez followed suit."

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